
WABASH INFO

March 2008

Volume 2

Leadership Transitions

On Saturday, March 8, 2008 at the Aldersgate Free Methodist Church in Indianapolis, Indiana, 175 pastors and lay delegates from the 79 Wabash Conference Churches gathered for an early sitting of the Wabash Annual Conference. The primary purpose of the meeting was to receive the report of the Superintendent Nominating Committee, and to elect a conference superintendent. This position was left vacant when former Superintendent Chet Martin asked to be released from his appointment to return to pastoral ministry.

Bishop David Kendall, president of the conference and chair of the committee, presented the report and the committee's nomination, interim superintendent, Joseph F. James. The nominee responded to several questions posed by the bishop, pastors and lay delegates. James received 156 votes of the 175 ballots cast and was elected to a four year term. Superintendent Joe and Marilyn James were invited to the altar for prayer, as the congregation gathered asking for God's blessing upon them.

Pastors and delegates of the West Virginia churches expressed thanks to the conference for the option of voting by electronic or mail ballot (which most did), rather than incurring both time and expense of traveling to Indianapolis for a two hour meeting. Their ballots are included in the numbers above.

Earlier in the conference, Larry Bailey (elder), gave testimony of God's call upon his life, and was received by letter of transfer from the South Atlantic Conference. Larry and Pam Bailey moved to Huntington, WV, to take up the work of the Living Water Free Methodist Church in January 2008. Their move seemed like returning home, since the Living Water Church was the home church for Larry and Pam in their earliest days in their walk with the Lord. We are pleased to welcome them to the pastoral team in West Virginia and to the Wabash Conference.

Superintendent James (elder) was also received by letter of transfer, but from another part of the US, the Pacific Northwest Conference, where he had served as superintendent eight years earlier.

The Ministerial Appointments Committee (Bishop David Kendall, Chair; Supt. Joe James, Vice Chair; Rev. David Colgan; Pearson Miller and Iona Sewell) are continuing to meet for their work in preparing the appointments for the pastors of the Wabash Conference. There will be several pastoral changes this year. As part of the process, Superintendent James will meet with each church Board of Administration where a pastoral change is anticipated. The first visit will be to explain the pastoral appointments process and leave a local church profile, self-study. The second visit will be to review the completed self study with the board. The third visit will be to introduce to the board the pastoral leader that the Ministerial Appointments Committee anticipates appointing to the church.

One of the most important responsibilities of each annual conference is to identify, recruit, train, ordain, and appoint pastoral leaders for the churches. Please pray for the Ministerial Education and Guidance Board and Ministerial Appointments Committee who have primary responsibility for this. They will bring their report to the Wabash Annual Conference on June 20 and 21. Thank you for your prayers for wisdom and direction from the Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ, for the leadership needs in the churches in Wabash Conference.

Supt. Joe James' Vision Statement – “Rebuilding the House of God” (Excerpts)

The prophet Haggai posed this question from the Lord ... “Why are you living in luxurious houses while my house lies in ruins?” (Haggai 1:3 NLT). It is a fair question.

And how did the people respond?

“When they heard the words of the prophet Haggai, whom the Lord their God had sent, the people feared the Lord.” ... “and the whole remnant of God’s people began to obey the message from the Lord their God.” ... “I am with you, says the Lord!” ... “So the Lord sparked the enthusiasm of Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the enthusiasm of Jeshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and the enthusiasm of the whole remnant of God’s people. They began rebuilding the house of their God ...” (from Haggai 1:4, 12-14 NLT).

I do not consider myself a prophet. But the Lord has spoken to me through this scripture as I prepared this vision statement. There is no need for “my house (Wabash) to lie in ruins”. There is no need for our churches to be in decline. There is no need for the camp to be outdated. There is no need for our missionaries to be unfunded. There is no need for our churches to be without godly competent leaders. There is no need for God’s cherished missing to remain missing. There is no need for us to be discouraged or apathetic or cynical. We are God’s people. God has called us to be courageous. He has given us His Holy Spirit. He has promised to go with us. We can be victorious through Him.

We can respond to God’s call, even as the remnant of God’s people did in Haggai’s day. We can redirect our priorities. We can build our homes without neglecting God’s house. We can enjoy the work of our hands without giving our leftovers to God. We can even welcome God’s radical call to deny ourselves and take up our cross and follow Him. And His call will take us not only within the bounds of Wabash but to the ends of the earth, working together “rebuilding the house of God.” God will use this radical obedience to make an eternal difference in the lives of people of our day and transform the society around us. God is able. He is more than able. Are we willing?

In fact if we are to be obedient to God, this is how we will live. We dare not rely on our own strength or resources. Only the Lord can “spark the enthusiasm” of the superintendent, and “spark the enthusiasm” of the pastors, and “spark the enthusiasm” of the people called Free Methodists in Wabash as we passionately pursue “rebuilding the house of God.” The word enthusiasm comes from two Greek words “en theos”, meaning God in us. And so we call upon Him to inspire and accomplish through us all that he desires.

In Haggai’s day the turnaround took place when the remnant of God’s people began to “fear the Lord.” This is not being afraid of the Lord. It is rather a deep reverence for God, a fresh recognition that God is God and placing Him at the center of our lives and ministries. He is Lord of our lives. He is Lord of the church. He is Lord of the mission. It is not about us. It is about Him. This clear perspective, this God given worldview is what is needed for us to readily respond in obedience to His mission.

I am ready to make these kinds of commitments with you, as together we “rebuild the house of the Lord” across Wabash and beyond.

Superintendent James then identified six areas that he will give top priority in the coming months: Leadership Development, Redeveloping Plateaued and Declining Churches, Planting New Churches, Christian Camp Ministry, Communication, World Missions

There is one thing we must do. All our ministries must help us fulfill our Lord’s Commission to be disciples and make disciples. I am committed to that end as we “rebuild the house of God” in Wabash.

Simple Church – by Joe F. James (reprinted from the February 2008 ECHOES – West Virginia FM monthly newsletter)

On my return from India this past week I was intrigued by Thom S. Rainer and Eric Geiger's book entitled Simple Church. The research behind this book, a case study of four hundred churches, concludes that complex, over-programmed, busy churches are struggling, while simple churches are growing and vibrant.

The authors identify simple churches as those consumed with the call to make disciples. In these churches leaders design and follow a simple process to reach and mature people in their walk with Christ. Their aim, as one church states it, is to lead people to love God, love others, and serve the world. They say "no" to the clutter of good things that distract from disciple making. As we look at the life of Jesus, we soon discover that he confronted religious leaders who made following God complex. Jesus summarized the law and the prophets in two commands – love God and love others. That is it.

But simple may not be as simple as it sounds. Life is messy. Our world is complex. Churches both large and small quickly lose focus and drift toward complexity, maintaining traditions and programs that no longer help accomplish the mission, burning up energies that could be better used in fulfilling our Lord's commission to go and make disciples.

Our last Sunday in India, Marilyn and I worshipped at one of the many Free Methodist Churches in the crowded mega-city of Mumbai, 19 million people. We arrived at the church a little early and joined the close of the first service of the day (in the Tamil language). I was impressed with the passion of the pastor, and the attentiveness of this youthful congregation. The pastor slipped away for his next service at another church in the area.

This simple, one room church, now emptying of people was being prepared for the next service, a combined service of the Marathi and Hindi congregations. Most of the chairs were removed and rugs placed on the cement floor. This chapel was soon to be filled and overflowing with men, women, children and youth, most squeezed together, sitting on the floor. These congregations had doubled from the Spirit's moving through a recent citywide outreach. Many families were seeking after Christ. Again the worship was vibrant, and celebrative. The service concluded with Holy Communion. Christ's presence was very evident as we shared in this service of praise and thanksgiving.

During the announcements the people rejoiced over the reports of their expanding extension ministries in another state, Gujarat. They prayed and received gifts to support "their" nursing student, Jayshree, at the Helen Rose School of Nursing at Umri Christian Hospital. Jayshree's mother, a part of this church family, works as a housekeeper, making less than a dollar a day for her hard labor. Without the church supporting her daughter, Jayshree could never respond to God's calling her to be a nurse.

Here, on the other side of the world, in the heart of a very complex city, I watched small congregations, and loving pastors lead their people in loving God, loving others and serving in their community. It was beautiful.

You may be asking, and it makes me wonder, do we need to simplify? To cut away any underbrush that keeps us from a committed focus on making disciples?

Wabash Ministerial Education and Guidance Board actions:

- Brian Bither is recommended as a Conference Ministerial Candidate.
- Greg Coates (Conference Ministerial Candidate) is recommended to be received by transfer from the Gateway Conference.
- Gage Norem is recommended as a Conference Ministerial Candidate.
- Gene Beard is recommended (under the Apollos Model) for ordination as an elder.
- Mike McCune, elder, was granted a letter of transfer to the Pacific Northwest Conference. Mike has been serving as Youth Pastor at the John Wesley FMC in Indianapolis, but recently accepted a staff position at the Cornerstone Christian Fellowship Free Methodist Church in Omak, WA. Our thanks to Mike and Bethany for their years of service in Wabash.

Wabash Leadership Meetings

Supt. James is looking forward to meeting in 9 area gatherings of Wabash pastors and lay leaders across the conference. Pastors, local church Board of Administration members and other lay leaders who wish to attend are invited to participate. Topics will include items that will help us prepare for the June 20 & 21 Wabash Annual Conference. These will include the following:

- New delegate orientation
- Roll of the delegate
- The value of coaching in leadership development
- Major proposed change in the way Wabash churches support Free Methodist Church of North America “Home Ministries”
- Significant developments at Wabash Park Camp (Board restructuring), Wabash Park Camp Director position, new lodge development, addressing the pressing utility upgrade needs at the camp
- These meetings will include a time of worship and prayer, vision casting, refreshments and networking with other leaders.

Meeting dates and locations are listed below. They will be from 7 -9 p.m. (local time).

- April 21 Wabash Leadership Meeting, 7-9 p.m. at Aldersgate
Participating Churches: Anderson Wesley, Clay City, Greensburg, Mooresville, New Castle, Noblesville, Indianapolis churches: Aldersgate, Comunidad Cristiana, First Church, First Chinese, John Wesley, Mars Hill, Ritter Avenue, West Morris St.
- April 22 Wabash Leadership Meeting, 7-9 pm at Fairmont, WV
Participating Churches: Bridgeport, Fairmont, Fairmont Mt. Sharon, Fairmont Samaria, Hendricks, Kingwood, Morgantown, Morgantown Beulah, Morgantown Mt. View, Rivesville
- April 24 Wabash Leadership Meeting, 7-9 pm at Harper, WV
Participating Churches: Harper, Huntington Living Water, Huntington Norwood, Milton, Princeton
- April 28 Wabash Leadership meeting, 7-9 pm at Bloomington
Participating Churches: Bedford, Bloomington, Columbus, Columbus Rocky Ford, Spraytown, Tunnel Hill
- April 29 Wabash Leadership Meeting, 7-9 pm at Lafayette
Participating Churches: Attica, Boswell, Indianapolis Light & Life, Kokomo Brookside, Kokomo Mt. Zion, Lafayette, Lafayette Great Commission
- May 12 Wabash Leadership Meeting, 7-9 pm at Washington
Participating Churches: Evansville, Petersburg, Rumbletown, St. Francisville, Tennyson, Vincennes, Washington
- May 15 Wabash Leadership Meeting, 7-9 pm at Olney

- Participating Churches: Albion, Birds, Bridgeport, Cowling, Flat Rock, Island, Lawrenceville, Lyons, Mt. Carmel, Neoga, Newton, Olney, Robinson, Sumner
- May 19 Wabash Leadership Meeting, 7-9 pm at South Bend
Participating Churches: Elkhart, Ft. Wayne, Griffith, Merrillville, Michigan City, South Bend, Springville, Winona Lake
- May 22 Wabash Leadership Meeting, 7-9 pm at Champaign
Participating Churches: Arcola, Bradbury, Champaign, Danville, Mattoon, Terre Haute, Urbana

Wabash Conference Calendar of Upcoming Events

- March 23 EASTER SUNDAY
- March 24 & 25 IN/IL Pastor/Spouse Retreat, Brown County Inn, Nashville, IN (see below for more details)
- March 28 & 29 WV Pastor & Spouse Retreat, Cedar Lakes Conference Center (see below for more details)
- April 3 1st Annual Seven Alive Luncheon (see below for more details)
- April 10 -12 Come to the Water Conference for Women Clergy (Nashville, TN)
- April 11 & 12 Breaking Away 25 @ Vincennes University (see below for more details)
- April 19 & 20 Children's Lock-in at Wabash Park Camp (see below for more details)
- April 25 & 26 WMI Spring Retreat, Columbus, IN (see conference website: www.wabashconference.org for more information)
- April 27 Mission Indy Rally, 6 p.m. at Light & Life FMC
- June 17-21 Teen Camp at Blackhills Camp
- June 20-21 124th Wabash Annual Conference at Wabash Park Camp
- June 23-28 Kids Camp 1 at Camp Wildwood, Wabash Park Camp
- June 23-28 Senior Teen Ministry Camp, Wabash Park Camp
- June 30-July 5 Young Teen Camp 1 at Camp Wildwood, Wabash Park Camp
- July 7-12 Kids Camp 2 at Camp Wildwood, Wabash Park Camp
- July 10-20 West Virginia Family Camp at Blackhills Camp
- July 14-19 Young Teen Camp 2 at Camp Wildwood, Wabash Park Camp
- July 21-27 Illinois/Indiana Family Camp at Wabash Park Camp
- July 31-Aug 3 Hispanic Family Camp at Wabash Park Camp
- August 10 Mission Indy Rally at Indy First FMC
- August 28-29 Pastors' Resourcing Days at Wabash Park Camp

Dessert Concerts Planned

Final plans are being prepared for a proposed year-round Lodge at Wabash Park Camp. This Lodge will include 6 sleeping rooms with individual bathrooms, a mini-kitchen, housing/meeting space for up to 48 people. A matching grant of \$150,000 has been made available. Fundraising for this project is underway. Approximately 1/3 of the funds have been committed. Evening Dessert Concerts have been scheduled at Anderson Wesley FMC (April 18), Indianapolis Aldersgate FMC (May 3) and Bloomington FMC (May 31). Questions? Contact Deborah Ralston, Wabash Park Promoter at 812-580-8049 or email at suntreeplace@aol.com.

Pastors' and Spouses Retreats

We are looking forward to the Indiana/Illinois Pastor/Spouse Retreat on March 24-25, 2008, at Brown County Inn, Nashville, IN, and the West Virginia Pastor/Spouse Retreat on March 28-29, at Cedar Lake Conference Center, Ripley, WV. The speaker for both retreats is Bishop David Kendall who will speak on the following topics:

Facing the Truth (about what ails us and what (who) will heal us)

Embracing the Truth (getting well, becoming whole, being holy and happy)

Developing and Deepening our Hunger for Holiness (our appetite for true happiness and wholeness)

We are pleased to announce that Adam & Emily Davison will join us at the Indiana/Illinois Retreat. Adam will lead us in worship. He serves as worship pastor at Spring Arbor Free Methodist Church and led the worship team for the 2007 General Conference and recent IYC's. We are also pleased that Marilyn James will be leading worship at the West Virginia Pastor/Spouse Retreat.

Retired pastors. My apologies for not providing clear communication to you. A change in this year's Pastor/Spouse Retreats is that the retreats are for the active appointed pastoral team members and their spouses. This change was not communicated to you. Our apologies.

NewPointe Unfiltered Conference – April 26 & 27, 2008

The NewPointe Community Free Methodist Church in Dover, OH, (Senior Pastor, Dwight Mason) is offering a conference to give insight into their tremendous church growth and success. In 2007, they averaged 2,100 in their 3 morning worship services. Would you like to hear the nuts and bolts of how they are making a difference in their community? Then NewPointe Unfiltered may be for you.

You will attend a worship service, take a guided tour of their LIVE programming, and participate in 1½ days of informal sessions and discussion. Registration is limited to 75 participants so contact the church soon if you would like to participate. The cost is \$59 which includes the Saturday evening meal and Sunday lunch, plus handouts. To find out more about the church visit their website at: www.newpointe.org. To register for the conference, call 330-602-5600.

Breaking Away 25 – So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed! – John 8:36

April 11-12, 2008 (9 pm – 7 am) @ the Vincennes University, Cost \$25

Featuring: High Flight Society and Carlos Oscar

You will enjoy bowling, basketball, volleyball, swimming, dodge ball, video arcade, inflatables, billiards, plus your chance to win awesome prizes including an iPod, digital camera, Nintendo Wii, and more!

Contact your youth pastor or youth leader for more information.

5th Annual Children's Lock In

The theme for this year's Lock In at the Wabash Park Campground is **BODY SHOP – Drive in for a Faith Tune-UP!** Special guests are Dennis Lee & Nana Puddin'. The event will start at 1 p.m. on Saturday, April 19 and finish at 12:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 20. The cost is \$25 per child. The Lock In is for children in

grades 3-6. The registration deadline is Friday, March 28, 2008. See your pastor or Children's Director for additional information.

Mission Indy Announces: Seven Alive – A New Senior Adult Ministry

Aldersgate--First Church--John Wesley--Light & Life--Mars Hill--Ritter Avenue--W. Morris St.

The Mission Indy Team is launching a new ministry to Senior Adults called, "Seven Alive." Since early Fall, Senior representatives of our seven Indianapolis area FM churches, and their ethnic ministry partners, have met to pray, plan, envision possibilities and share together ways they might partner with one another in mission, ministry and fellowship.

The first Annual Seven Alive luncheon will be held on Thursday, April 3, from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m., at the Crown Room, 56th & Northfield Streets, Brownsburg, IN. The lunch will be a buffet catered by Jonathan Bryd. The cost is \$15.00 per person (all inclusive).

If you are a senior with one of the seven Indianapolis churches and would like more information or would like to register for this exciting event, please contact your pastor or Senior representative before March 23.

Church News

- Pastor Dave & Jessica Stevenson (Aldersgate Church) welcomed their 3rd son, Joshua Aaron, on February 13. He was 8 lbs, 6 oz and 21.5 in long. Everyone is doing great!
- Dawn Martin, wife of Pastor Chet Martin (Light & Life Church) has been selected as the 2008 Teacher of the Year at Sanders School in Wayne Township Schools in Indianapolis. This automatically places her as a candidate for the Teacher of the Year for Wayne Township for 2008. Congratulations, Dawn!

Bishops' Famine/Relief Fund

On Christmas Eve 2007, in the mountainous Kandhamal district, in the heart of Orissa, India, a series of attacks began on Christians. Over a five day period, 23 of our Free Methodist churches were broken down or destroyed and 300 families became homeless, effecting at least a thousand of our members in that area.

The Bishops' Famine/Relief Fund has sent \$24,000 to assist with this crisis in Orissa. The funds have been used to provide rice, lentils, vegetables, meat, clothes, medicine, mats, blankets, towels and many other necessary items to help the riot victims.

It is reported that our people are starting to return to their villages but with fear and hesitation for a number of reasons:

1. Non-Christian villagers are still threatening and against their return.
2. Their houses have been burned down.
3. Their livestock has been destroyed.
4. Their business will not run even if they have money to do it without the cooperation of the local populace.
5. Their church buildings are destroyed. They cannot have corporate meetings.

Life has played very hard against our friends in this region. They are in desperate need of help to rebuild their homes and their churches. Supt. James is encouraging the churches of Wabash Conference to consider a special offering during this Easter season for the Bishops' Famine/Relief Fund, specifically for the pressing need Orissa. Will you help?

Please forward funds to the Wabash Conference and we will forward to the World Ministry Center. Please mark funds clearly "Bishops' Famine/Relief Fund - India." Thank you.